

Recommended Guidelines for Opening Churches from COVID-19

These guidelines are recommendations for churches in our community to begin to meet again inside their church buildings in a way that will help protect their parishioners' health as well as minister to their souls. Church leaders must understand that whenever they choose to open their facilities, they now have a greater social responsibility for keeping everyone safe. It is encouraged for churches to do a "soft opening" no sooner than the weekend of May 2 and 3 so they might have adequate time to prepare their facilities and educate their parishioners on their plans to open.

Social Distancing

- Churches should encourage families to sit together as a family group but be seated at least 6 ft. from other families. Hugs and hand-shakes should be strongly discouraged for the next few weeks.
- Post Social Distancing reminders on doors, on video screens and make announcements. Sign might also include "If you are ill we invite you to join us for worship online until you are feeling better."
- Churches should try to limit their attendance to 30% of their seating capacity. Adding additional service times on Saturday night or on Sundays and opening up fellowship halls or balconies for seating with video screens are a possible solution. A special service time for the elderly and "at-risk" parishioners is also a good option.
- It is recommended that churches not hold Sunday School or small groups for at least a couple of weeks and not hold any special dinners or events that would bring a crowd through May.
- It is recommended that churches not offer nursery or children's church ministries for the next few weeks.

Cleanliness and Godliness

- Offer plenty of hand sanitizer in various locations and encourage usage.
- Have volunteers do a good cleaning after each service.
- Shorten service times to 45 minutes or less in order to cut down the exposure time and to decrease the number of people needing to use the rest room.
- It is suggested to not "Pass the Offering Plate" from person to person. Some ideas are a "giving box" at the entrances, online giving or if possible, one person holding the plate at all times. Ushers are encouraged to wear gloves when counting the money.
- If your church offers communion, it is recommended to use individual communion packets. Pre-packaged ones can be purchased at most Christian Book Stores.

Churches that agree to these recommendations are asked to fill out the information below and return it to the County Health Department along with any other things your church is doing to be pro-active.

Church _____ Address _____

Contact Person _____ Phone _____

Email _____